

# Indiana House of Representatives

## News and Information

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### **GIAQUINTA: COMPLAINT ON LOCAL GAMING RAISES MORE QUESTIONS, GIVES FEW ANSWERS**

INDIANAPOLIS – Rather than answering questions about public concerns on video gaming machines in Allen County, information provided by the Indiana Alcohol and Tobacco Commission provides greater evidence that recent crackdowns are designed primarily to protect Indiana's gaming industry, according to State Rep. Ben GiaQuinta (D-Fort Wayne).

In response to a Freedom of Information request filed by GiaQuinta, officials with the commission sent the lawmaker an anonymous letter complaining about the presence of video gambling machines (more commonly known as "cherry masters") in more than 60 establishments in the county.

"There are any number of questions that arise from this letter," GiaQuinta said. "We were told that this crackdown was the result of a series of complaints filed by a number of area citizens. When we ask for more information, we are shown an anonymous letter that offers one mass complaint.

"I do not advocate illegal gambling in the state of Indiana. However, for us to decide whether cherry masters should be licensed and monitored, it is important to gauge public sentiment on the scope of this problem," he added. "One mass complaint does not provide an indication of widespread public concern. It is not farfetched to consider whether this single letter was submitted as an effort to protect the gaming industry."

The legislator said the response from the commission confirmed their fears that legal gaming interests might be behind the effort to take a revenue source away from fraternal organizations.

"I have spoken to the officials at a number of American Legion posts, all of whom have told me that they were paying taxes on any income from these machines and putting much of that revenue back into their communities," said GiaQuinta, a World War II veteran.

"These people deserve to get straight answers from public officials, rather than evasions and half-truths," he continued. "The chairman of the alcohol and tobacco commission has admitted publicly that he discussed the recent enforcement push with the governor's office. He should have admitted that from the beginning."

GiaQuinta compared the efforts to crack down on video gaming with the state's endorsement of legalized gambling through the slogan, "Fun is Good!"

"This motto puts a seal on the state's endorsement of games that have far worse odds of success than those offered through these fraternal organizations," GiaQuinta said. "When the state offers odds of less than one in 250 million on a Powerball jackpot, it is neither 'fun' nor 'good' that citizens are encouraged to buy a chance. At least these establishments have an incentive to keep their customers happy.

"It is becoming obvious that the current administration has no intention of addressing this issue in any manner that benefits the public," he noted. "I will be continuing to monitor their inaction, with an eye toward taking my own action in the 2006 session of the Legislature."

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